

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 200950Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2955

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 1079

NEA/EX FOR WILLIAMSON

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: AFSP TC

SUBJ: LAND OWNERSHIP

REF: STATE 110135

1. LAND OWNERSHIP IN ABU DHABI UNLIKE THAT OF THE U.S. OR OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES IS NOT FORMAL OR LEGALIZED AS WE KNOW IT. ALL LAND IS OWNED BY THE RULER, AND DEEDS AS SUCH DO NOT, TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, EXIST. FOR INSTANCE, THE SITE UPON WHICH THE CURRENT BRITISH EMBASSY IS LOCATED WAS ORIGINALLY GIVEN BY THE FORMER RULER TO THE BRITISH AGENCY 20 YEARS AGO. THE ONLY RECORD THAT EXISTS LOCALLY OF THAT TRANSACTION CONSISTS OF LETTERS SIGNED BY THAT RULER TURNING OVER THE PROPERTY. NEVERTHELESS, THEY, THE BRITISH, ARE PLANNING NOT ONLY TO RENOVATE EXISTING BUILDINGS, BUT TO ADD ADDITIONAL QUARTERS ON THE SITE. REGARDING THEIR NEW SITE UPON WHICH THEY ARE BUILDING AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE, THEY, LIKE OURSELVES, HAVE ONLY A COPY OF THE SITE PLAN SHOWING THE ENDORSEMENT OR RULER AND LETTER FROM CHAIRMAN OF THE MUNICIPALITY STATING THAT, BY ORDER OF THE RULER SHAIKH ZAYID, THE ATTACHED PLOT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO THE BRITISH EMBASSY (U.S. OF AMERICA IN OUR CASE) FOR CONSTRUCTION OF AN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE. NO OTHER DOCUMENTATION SUCH AS A DEED OR TITLE DOCUMENT IS REQUIRED (OR INDEED OBTAINABLE) AS FAR AS LOCAL AUTHORITIES ARE CONCERNED. ON BASIS OF THIS DOCUMENTATION WE ARE ASSURED THE PROPERTY IS OURS AND WILL REMAIN IN OUR NAME

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AS LONG AS PROPERTY IS USED BY EMBASSY. HOWEVER, IF AT

SOME LATER DATE WE WANTED TO DISPOSE OF THE PROPERTY, IT WOULD HAVE TO REVERT BACK TO THE RULER I.E. WE COULD NOT SELL IT.

2. WITH RESPECT TO FUTURE BUILDING OF CHANCERIES, ABU DHABI AUTHORITIES ARE PRESENTLY TAKING POSITION THAT THEY WANT ALL FUTURE CHANCERIES IN ONE AREA TO BE DESIGNATED THE DIPLOMATIC ENCLAVE, WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN DIVIDED INTO PLOTS ASSIGNED TO VARIOUS GOVERNMENTS, BRITISH ARE ONLY EXCEPTION TO THIS THUS FAR BECAUSE OF FACT THEY HAD BEEN GIVEN LARGE PLOT OF LAND IN CENTER OF TOWN WHICH WAS THEIR POLITICAL AGENCY PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE. TERMS OF ACQUISITION OF PLOTS OF LAND WITHIN DIPLOMATIC ENCLAVE WILL BE BASED ON RECIPROCITY. FOR COUNTRIES LIKE U.S. WHERE LAND MUST BE ACQUIRED, PLOTS ARE AVAILABLE ON A 20-YEAR LEASE, RENEWABLE. THE COST PER ANNUM IS DIRHAM 6,000, A VERY REASONABLE FEE.

3. SEVERAL OTHER GOVERNMENTS WE HAVE TALKED TO HERE ARE UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT BUILDING IN AREA DESIGNATED FOR DIPLOMATIC ENCLAVE, WHICH IS NEAR PORT AND AT EXTREME OPPOSITE END OF TOWN FROM LOCATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT MINISTRY BUILDINGS AND MOST HOTELS THAT WILL BE CONSTRUCTED. WE TOO ARE NOT VERY ENTHUSIASTIC ALTHOUGH WE SEE GOVERNMENT'S POINT OF VIEW DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS WOULD BE FACILITATED BY HAVING THEM ALL IN ONE AREA. IF WE CAN GET AUTHORIZATION TO BUILD AS EMBASSY RECOMMENDS, WE WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE WITH ABU DHABI AUTHORITIES POSSIBILITY OF ACQUIRING SITE MORE FAVORABLY LOCATED. STERNER

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